

Chapter 5

Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) Responsibilities

The goal of drinking water standards is to ensure water is safe for human consumption.

Administration of the drinking water standards is accomplished through use of regulations, monitoring of finished water quality and inspecting operational practices at public water systems.



In 1974, Congress passed legislation to develop a national program to protect the quality of the nation's public water systems. Now known as the "Safe Drinking Water Act", this law established national drinking water standards that were to be administered and enforced by State agencies.

Indiana has maintained a regulatory and technical assistance presence with public water supplies since the inception of the SDWA. Initially, Indiana's role was to monitor and inspect the community and noncommunity water systems and provide information to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In the early 1990's, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) accepted a new role with respect to public water systems -- regulation of water quality and construction of water system facilities.

The following section discusses the roles and responsibilities of the IDEM Drinking Water program, as well as other programs within the agency that work with public water systems.

5.1 Ensuring Safe, Clean Drinking Water

The administration of the Drinking Water program by IDEM is accomplished by four (4) sections within the Drinking Water Branch, which perform functions related to monitoring and compliance with regulations, and technical assistance to public water systems. The following will describe the responsibilities of the IDEM Drinking Water program according to these primary functions.

5.1.1 Monitoring and Compliance

The monitoring responsibilities of IDEM are based on the role the State has in implementing the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Therefore, IDEM's monitoring role includes the following: (1) ensuring all systems meet established standards for drinking water quality, (2) collection and analysis of water samples, (3) reporting of sampling results, (4) facility construction, (5) operation and maintenance of public water facilities, and (6) program management.

Water Quality Monitoring and Reporting

- Evaluation of all monitoring data required under State and federal drinking water regulations
- Preparing and issuing monitoring schedules for all public water systems
- Evaluating and issuing requests for reductions in monitoring (i.e., monitoring waivers)
- Evaluating monitoring programs by systems, and the adequacy of treatment processes for required treatment techniques (e.g., surface water treatment rule)
- Collect water quality samples at systems when requested
- Collect ground water quality data from around the state
- Monitor for the presence in pesticides in groundwater on a State-wide basis

Facility Construction

- Evaluate new construction at public water systems to ensure designs meet State and regional standards
- Inspect new construction to ensure facilities are built according to approved plans and specifications
- Inspect new or proposed well or intake sites to ensure location is protected from contamination

Operation and Maintenance of Public Water Systems

- Perform routine inspections of public water systems (i.e., “sanitary surveys”) to identify problems in facilities, maintenance or operations that may affect drinking water quality
- Evaluate water system treatment processes to ensure compliance with regulations
- Assist IDNR in evaluating the use of chemicals to control aquatic plants in water used by public water systems
- Issue certifications for public water system operators and perform testing of prospective operators

Program Management

- Maintain information on each public water system, regarding inventory information (name, location, operator name, etc.)
- Evaluate groundwater systems to determine whether wells are under the influence of surface water
- Review wellhead protection plans from public water systems
- Evaluate new proposed public water systems to ensure they possess adequate financial, technical and managerial capacity to operate a public water system
- Identify operating public water systems to determine if financial assistance is required to achieve compliance with drinking water standards

5.1.2 Advising and Technical Assistance

The Drinking Water program within IDEM has additional responsibilities beyond regulation of public water systems. This additional role is to provide advice and technical assistance to public water systems concerning various aspects of public water system operations. The assistance provided by IDEM generally includes the following: (1) knowledge and understanding of State and federal regulations for public water systems; (2) appropriate operation and maintenance of the system; (3) training and testing of system operators; (4) appropriate design of water supply, treatment and distribution facilities; and (5) general water quality issues.

State and Federal Regulations

- Provide alerts to public water systems when compliance deadlines (e.g., monitoring or reporting) have not been met, such as warning of non-compliance (WONC) letters
- Provide training meetings and workshops on new rules or policies
- Develop educational materials (e.g., fact sheets) explaining new rules or policies
- Form workgroups, that include water system operators, consultants, etc., to assist in developing new rules and policies
- Work one-on-one with public water system operators/superintendents to explain drinking water regulations

Operations and Maintenance

- Develop guidance on appropriate water system operations and maintenance
- Provide systems with recommendations for improving operation and maintenance activities through routine inspections (e.g., sanitary surveys) and follow-up correspondence
- Assist water systems in sample collection
- Assist water systems in identifying and correcting water quality problems, through response on violations

Training and Testing of Public Water System Operators

- Provide assistance in developing the materials and format for operator training programs (e.g., Short School)
- Review and approve workshops, seminars, etc., for operator continuing education credits
- Notifying certified operators on continuing education credits and testing dates and locations
- Organize operator certification testing and evaluate tests

Design of Public Water System Facilities

- Provide assistance to engineers and consultants on individual construction of drinking water facilities
- Develop rules and guidance for appropriate design of drinking water facilities
- Assist systems and their consultants in planning capital improvements and identifying sources of State financial assistance (i.e., Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Loan Program

General Water Quality Issues

- Provide assistance on managing potential sources of ground water contamination (Wellhead Protection)
- Collect and provide data on regional or local ground and surface water quality
- Collect and analyze data on agricultural chemicals in ground water

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